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Health for All Kansans Steering Committee approves health reform legislative package

KHPA Board to review and approve package tomorrow

Calling it the first step to health reform in Kansas, the Health for All Kansans Steering Committee approved a health reform legislative package today, hopeful the Legislature approves it and the Governor signs it.

“Over the past several months of steering committee meetings, I have been impressed by the energy and focus from these members to accomplish great reform designed to improve the health of all Kansans. Today, we made a critical down payment to Kansans,” said Marci Nielsen, PhD, MPH, Executive Director of the Kansas Health Policy Authority (KHPA). “I am encouraged by the progress we have made and will continue to make as we move forward together, working across aisles for the benefit of the people we serve.”

Tomorrow, at the monthly Board meeting, the Kansas Health Policy Authority Board will review and approve the package, before sending it to the Kansas Legislature.

The legislative package approved today for passage this session includes:

- **Early detection and screening for newborns.** Expand screening for newborns from our current level of four tests to twenty-nine which will lead to early diagnosis and intervention that will pay immeasurable benefits in future years.
- **Medicaid outreach and enrollment expansion.** Expand the marketing of programs available to the public in order to educate Kansans about the Healthwave program and health and wellness through: (1) designing an online application and screening tool for potential beneficiaries, (2) developing and implementing a targeting marketing campaign and (3) employing additional outreach workers.
- **Consider DRA Flexibilities.** The Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) allows moving waiver services into the Medicaid state plan, designing benchmark benefit packages with more cost sharing, and exploring innovative reform models through Medicaid Transformation Grants.
- **Cover Kansas pregnant women, children and/or low-families through Premium Assistance.** Premium assistance programs use federal and state Medicaid and/or SCHIP funds to subsidize the purchase of private health insurance. There are various models that can be used.
- **Promoting price and quality transparency.** Promote Transparency for Kansas Consumers and Purchasers through a two-phased approach that collects data currently available in one convenient location (through KHPA and State libraries), and then adds health care pricing and quality data (as determined by the KHPA Data Consortium – comprised of providers, consumers, and purchasers).

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This kind of information will also help to reduce utilization of care that is not evidence-based or is of questionable quality, which can serve to reduce overall health care costs.

- **Increasing Health Information Technology/Exchange (HIT/HIE).** Building on the work of the Health Care Cost Containment Commission and the KHPA staff, the state should establish an Implementation Center for HIE in Kansas through a public/private entity as a single coordination point for Kansas HIE efforts.

Once approved by the KHPA Board tomorrow, the package will be introduced in the Legislature yet this session.

Between April and November of 2007, KHPA will develop a more long-term health reform plan for consideration during the 2008 Legislative session.

The Health for All Kansans Steering Committee was created by the Kansas Health Policy Authority Board to advise the Board, Governor and legislative leadership, including the Joint Committee on Health Policy Oversight, on initiatives and ways to reform health in Kansas, making health services more accessible, through legislation this session.

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